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DDI 4948-83  
7 July 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

FROM: Helene L. Boatner  
Chief, Product Evaluation Staff

SUBJECT: The DCI, Estimates, and the Pipeline

1. As I indicated in our discussions of the findings of our study of DI work on East-West issues, there is a widespread impression in other government agencies that the DCI superimposed his own views on the pipeline issue on those of the Community, both in policy meetings and in the estimates process, and effectively cancelled out the impact of CIA analysis. This perception is widely held in policy units of the several departments we contacted, as well as in the Intelligence Community. This view of the DCI's role emerges particularly in connection with the NIE process and appears to stem from fundamental conflicts between three facts of life:

- The role of this DCI as policy, as well as intelligence, advisor to the President.
- The DCI's desire for speedy production of policy-relevant estimates.
- The inability of large organizations to staff out last minute changes.

This is not necessarily a matter anyone should or can "correct." But it is something that both you and he should be aware of.

2. Three of the estimates that fell within the scope of our study generated considerable comment:

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All began as DI papers, were converted into SNIEs at the DCI's suggestion, and were handled as "fast-track" SNIEs. All were the subject of praise from some customers and criticism from most of the Intelligence Community personnel we talked to, as well as some customers. The details were different, depending on the paper in question, but common themes emerged.

- The customers who praised the three papers were usually political appointees whose approval apparently (in some cases admittedly) stemmed from agreement with the conclusions of the papers and belief that the conclusions advanced the "right" policies.
- These same individuals characterized "most CIA analysis"—not including these SNIEs—as "politically inspired" and intended to get the USG to stop trying to block the pipeline.
- The customers who criticized the three SNIEs were usually career government employees. They and the intelligence officers pointed to inconsistency between the Key Judgments and text of each paper, preferred the texts as the more "objective" treatment in each case, and generally held different views from the first group on what policy would have been "right" in each case.
- Almost all the critics, and some of those who praised the papers, mentioned the personal role of the DCI as the primary determinant of what appeared in the Key Judgments of the papers. In this regard, intelligence officers used words such as "railroaded" and "steamrollered," and they commented that the DCI's judgments were "shoehorned in" at the last minute to negate the impact of the text.

3. Critics of the SNIEs in question do not seem to be blaming CIA as an institution. Indeed, we heard a fair amount of comment from them to the effect that CIA analysts deserved high marks for standing up as well as they did under pressure from the DCI and others to draw different conclusions. But the result is a widespread impression, at least among those involved in the pipeline issue, of a chasm between the DCI and the DI—an impression that we believe is potentially dangerous for all concerned. Moreover, there seems to be a growing impression that the role the DCI plays as a policy advocate is turning DI analysts into policy advocates as well, although not necessarily on the same side of the issues.

4. It is, we believe, the visibility of the DCI's hand in the fast-track SNIE in particular that makes the estimative process the breeding ground for so much of the finger-pointing. But as long as we seek to produce estimates rapidly on contentious issues, there may be no way to generate a product that is both collegial and substantively acceptable to the DCI.

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- If the DCI reviews papers in draft before they go to the NFIB Representatives for coordination, the Representatives believe that their coordination meetings are sterile and the results foreordained.
- If the DCI makes substantial changes after the Representatives have approved a draft, he is seen as imposing his own views.
- The latter problem is exacerbated if the time between the DCI's changes and the cut-off hour for NFIB or for telephonic concurrence is so short that the working-level officer in another Intelligence Community component cannot marshal his arguments and get them through the chain of command in time. This is usually the case on fast-track SNIES, especially for DIA.
- If the DCI does not share the judgments of an estimate, we cannot expect him to defend its conclusions.

5. Resentment at the working level within the Community might be alleviated somewhat if a more concerted effort were made to get the NFIB Principals to express the concerns of their subordinates. We encountered cases in which the working level had, in fact, gotten to the Principal, but a decision had been made to "let it go," apparently on grounds that Key Judgments satisfying the DCI and a text satisfying the analysts provided an acceptable way to meet the needs of all the players. Opening up more issues at NFIB would require that the NIOs take a more active role in seeking out the concerns of others, encouraging expressions of dissent, and suggesting that the NIO or the DCI raise potential problem areas for discussion. (The briefing memoranda done for the DCI on the three estimates in question appear to us to have minimized the problems revealed by our review of the record and encouraged pro forma consideration of the papers in question.)

6. In any event, more attention needs to be paid to aligning the texts of estimates with the Key Judgments. Printing a paper that points in different directions, depending on which portion you read, may be bureaucratically expedient; it is not professional. We should not expect the DCI to have to concern himself with internal inconsistency (which has been fairly common in the estimates we have reviewed in the course of our several evaluations to date). We should expect drafters and NIOs to identify such problems and correct them. The burden must fall largely on the NIOs. With your new responsibilities, however, you will be in an excellent position to put some muscle behind your oft-expressed belief in the importance of estimates and get DI drafters to take more responsibility for the final stages of an estimate.

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7. Another factor that needs to be watched arises often in the estimates process, as well as in tasking of the DI—the formulation of the question to be addressed. The need for skepticism about external tasking is underscored by the comments of one policy-level official who said he was pleased with our work because he knew what questions to ask in order to get the answers he wanted. We have a similar responsibility, I believe, to put internal tasking into a professional intelligence framework, especially when it comes to estimates and other formal publications. The DCI wants papers that discuss how the US might attain a desired objective, rather than why it cannot. That is what we should be doing, without having to be prodded. But ruling out discussion of some of the elements necessary to USG success—as the November 1981 SNIE [REDACTED] did when it excluded discussion of the problem of securing Western cooperation on sanctions—is a disservice to our customers, as well as our own reputation.

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**Melene L. Boatner**

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